TL 2254

Memo

From: José Ramos-Horta, Secretary Int'l Relations (FRETILIN)
To: All Timor Solidarity groups
Date: 15 Sep 1985

Subject: Information strategy. "East Timor News Agency" (ETNA)

1. It was in October 1975 that I and Roger East decided to set up the "East Timor News Agency" (ETNA). It was to be an independent agency in the service of East Timor. Though sponsored by FRETILIN's Dep't of External Relations and Information, ETNA would be operating under no constraints of any sort. That was Roger East's principled position and my personal conviction. During its brief existence before the invasion, ETNA began to fulfil a vital function.

2. After the invasion, ETNA was paralized. In Australia, Denis Freney, our tireless friend, took upon himself the task of editing the "East Timor News", a bulletin of "East Timor News Agency".

3. There is now a greater need and urgency to spread word about our struggle. I envision an ETNA that would try to distribute the large volume of regular information coming out now from East Timor to as large an audience as possible; an ETNA that would also try to portray through feature articles the daily life in the liberated areas or in the occupied zones. The two-way radio communication between East Timor and Australia should enable ETNA to carry out this important function. For I believe that the struggle in East Timor cannot be seen or perceived by our friends and the general public outside only as a military struggle. There are so many other facets of this struggle - cultural activities, agricultural work, health problems, etc. The idea is to project the image of a functioning civil, political and military body in the liberated areas. This is the ETNA I envision.

4. I have held discussions in Lisbon, New York and Maputo with certain news organizations (IPS, ANOP, AFP, AIM, etc) about this project. I have received encouraging response. For instance, the Information Minister of Mozambique, Mr. José Luís Cabaço, put at my disposal all the resources of the Mozambiquan AIM (Agência de Informação de Moçambique), including the assurance that a FRETILIN-appointed information cadre could be hired and paid by AIM as a full-time Correspondent, whose task would be solely to cover East Timor. Through AIM, news from and on East Timor, dissiminated by ETNA, would be wired immediately to ANOP (Lisbon), PANA (African News agency), ANGOP (Luanda), IPS (Rome), AFP (Paris), etc.

5. ETNA would have Correspondents in Maputo, Lisbon and several Australian cities where there are Timorese communities (Sydney, Melbourne, Darwin, Perth and Brisbane). An important task of these Correspondents would be to gather stories from refugees on their experience and/or information on conditions in East Timor.

6. ETNA will be created officially in the liberated areas of East Timor. It will be created also in Darwin and registered as an Australian-owned agency. Accreditation will be sought then in Lisbon and I do not anticipate any problem there.

7. ETNA would operate with telex machines for speedy distribution of news stories to its counterparts with whom it had firmed up agreements.

8. Support groups around the world are invited to subscribe to ETNA services for a monthly or annual fee to be established. It is understood that support groups would do their best to fund ETNA's operations with their subscription.

9. In submitting this project to the support groups, I would like to have a response from all as to your decision, in principle, to support such an endeavour.

Some concluding remarks.

I do not have grand illusions of creating an ETNA that would compete with the established agencies. ETNA will try only to fill a vacum. Priority would be to get info to the support groups as fast as possible. It would be then the responsibility of our friends to pass on the dispatches to their local contacts in the media, Parliament, governments, NGOs, etc.

Your support will ensure the success of this project.

END